

**Veterans Services Foundation
Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes
November 16, 2005**

A meeting of the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) was held on November 16, 2005, at the American Legion Department of Virginia Building in Richmond.

Members Present:

Vincent Burgess, Supriya Christopher, Lydia Dudley, Margaret Eure, Leroy Gross, John Hanson, and Frank Louthan, Jr.

Member Absent:

John Anderson, Frederick Leigh, and Ray Smoot

Others Present:

Steven Combs, Assistant to the Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services;
Roz Trent, Director of Communications, Department of Veterans Services;
Flora Hezel, Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General

Materials Distributed:

Meeting Agenda; Draft Minutes of the September 7, 2005 Meeting; November 3, 2005 Letter from Bill VanThiel to Vince Burgess RE: Operation Holiday Spirit Request; Data Sheets denoting the fund balance of the Veterans Services Fund: Fund Activity, Sub-Fund Activity, and Operation Holiday Spirit fund balance

Opening and Pledge of Allegiance

The Chairman called the meeting of the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Board of Trustees to order at 11:20 a.m. on Wednesday, November 16, 2005, at the American Legion Department of Virginia Building, located at 1708 Commonwealth Avenue in Richmond. The members recited the pledge of allegiance to the American flag.

Roll Call of Members and Quorum Determination

The roll was called and a quorum of six of ten members was recorded as present. Supriya Christopher arrived after the roll was called.

Review and Approval of March 9, 2005 Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the September 7th meeting were reviewed. Chairman Hanson asked for a motion that the minutes be approved as written. Margaret Eure made a motion that the minutes be approved as written. Lydia Dudley seconded the motion. The motion was then approved unanimously.

Frank Louthan expressed concern regarding the \$50,000 that the Board of Trustees had approved at its September 7th meeting to pay for expenses associated with the replacement walking trail at the McGuire VA Medical Center. He requested that the Foundation be provided written

documentation of all expenditures. Chairman Hanson stated that this issue would be addressed in the Commissioner's Update.

Comments from Chairs

Chairman Hanson introduced and welcomed Vincent Burgess, the new Acting Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services.

Mr. Louthan asked how the Commissioner was appointed and requested background information.

Acting Commissioner Burgess gave a brief summary of his educational background and work history, both in local and state government, as well as military, civic and community service. He advised that Foundation members would receive his full biography prior to the next Foundation meeting. Mr. Louthan thanked the Commissioner for his biographical summary.

Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Burgess reported as follows:

Groundbreaking Ceremony for Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center:

- The ground breaking ceremony for the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center took place on November 1, 2005. Commissioner Burgess stated that the ceremony was attended by federal and state officials, members of the General Assembly, members of many veterans service organizations, and members of the Board of Veterans Services, Veterans Services Foundation, Joint Leadership Council and Veterans Care Center Advisory Committee.
- Mr. Bill Leighty, Governor Warner's Chief of Staff, served as the Master of Ceremonies, and Governor Warner was the keynote speaker. The 160-nursing skilled bed facility is named for two Medal of Honor recipients with ties to the Richmond area – Colonel Van T. Barfoot and Col. Carl L. Sitter. Remarks were made by Col. Barfoot and Mrs. Ruth Sitter, widow of Col. Carl L. Sitter.
- Patricia Vandenberg, Assistant Deputy Undersecretary for Health, Policy and Planning, presented a check in the amount of \$14,749,800, USDVA's 65% contribution towards the construction of the care center.
- Under the State Home Grant Program, the Commonwealth of Virginia and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs jointly funded the project. Commonwealth of Virginia funds, \$7,942,000 (35%) for project costs, were approved in 2002.
- The facility will take approximately 20 months for completion of construction.
- The department hopes that 80 domiciliary beds will be added at a later date. The General Assembly has already approved a Treasury Loan in the amount of \$2.8 million (35%) and DVS has already applied for the federal grant for \$5.2 million (65%). The 80-bed addition is currently ranked as #78 of 129 projects on the priority list for VA funding.

- A third veterans care center proposed for construction in the Hampton Roads area is ranked as #128 of 129 projects on the priority list for VA funding.

Mr. Louthan inquired as to the Foundation's role with the care centers. Chairman Hanson responded that as the new care facility came on-line, the Foundation may be requested to provide funds for special events for the veterans at the care center. He explained that the Commonwealth, as the operator of the care center, provided a per diem for every resident at the care center.

Margaret Eure gave favorable comments regarding the groundbreaking ceremony for the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center. She stated that both she and her husband attended, as her husband had served under Colonel Barfoot. She further stated that it was good for the veterans to know that a facility was being built for their and other veterans' care. She stated that she and her husband was extremely touched by the comments given by Col. Barfoot and Mrs. Sitter, and commented that the ceremony was well organized and the time put into planning was well spent.

Walking Trail Expenses:

As reported at the September 7th Foundation meeting,

- The Director of the McGuire VA Medical Center requested that the walking trail be replaced prior to construction commencing of the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center;
- This was the result of a verbal agreement made a number of years ago between the former Director of the McGuire VA Medical Center and the former Virginia Veterans Care Center Board of Trustees;
- At the September 7th meeting, the Foundation approved the use of up to \$50,000 to pay for fuel, gravel, and construction of the replacement exercise stations;
- Through the assistance of the Governor's Office, the Virginia National Guard constructed the walking trail and VDOT put down gravel and asphalt. This was done at no cost to DVS;
- Replacement exercise equipment was purchased at a cost of \$7,654;
- The McGuire VA Medical Center installed the exercise equipment at no cost to DVS;
- Commissioner Burgess informed the Foundation that to date, the only cost associated with the walking trail replacement project was the purchase of the exercise equipment. Total project costs were therefore \$7,654.

Mr. Louthan commended the Commissioner for his report, and stated his pleasure that the entire \$50,000 had not been spent. He asked the Commissioner if he was sure that this was the final bill. Commissioner Burgess responded that he had discussed this with the Governor's Chief of Staff, and was informed that no other bill would be received. However, he stated that he would prepare a formal letter to the Chief of Staff reiterating that unless the Department received another bill by December 31, 2005 or was informed otherwise, the Department would consider

the \$7,654 bill as finality of the project costs. Foundation members would be copied. Mr. Louthan requested that the remaining balance (\$42,346) be unallocated and returned to the Fund.

Mrs. Eure stated that the Governor had thanked General Williams (Virginia National Guard) at the groundbreaking ceremony. She asked if it would be appropriate for the Foundation to thank both VDOT and the VA National Guard for the work performed on the walking trail.

Leroy Gross stated that originally he had concern due to lack of specificity as to what the \$50,000 approved amount would cover. He stated that in the future, should funds be requested from the Foundation, more explicit information would be helpful. However, he was extremely pleased with the \$ amount saved.

Chairman Hanson agreed that it was the consensus of the Foundation that more precise estimates be given in future requests.

Operation Holiday Spirit

Commissioner Burgess referred to the letter from Bill Van Thiel, Administrator of the Virginia Veterans Care Center, requesting \$15,600 to provide Christmas gifts to the residents at the facility. Steven Combs gave background on Operation Holiday Spirit. He stated that from donations received, the Care Center allocated \$65 per resident (240 residents) at the Care Center. Each resident is asked what they would specifically like to receive or need. From their request, \$65 worth of items is purchased. Each purchase varies based on the veterans' request for items. Mr. Combs told the Foundation that Care Center staff members solicit donations from local citizens and veterans groups to fund Operation Holiday Spirit.

Chairman Hanson restated that the Foundation was requested to give \$15,600, with the expectation that the funds would be offset with donations, and asked for a motion.

Mr. Louthan stated that this expenditure was well within the authority of the Foundation. He made a motion that the Foundation approve \$15,600, with the expectation that it will be offset with donations. Mr. Gross seconded. There was no opposition and the motion was approved unanimously.

Foundation members were referred to the data sheets denoting expenditures to date from the Veterans Services Foundation Fund Activity, Sub-Fund Activity and Operation Holiday Spirit which were included in the agenda packets.

Status of 501 (C) (3) Application

Flora Hezel, Assistant Attorney General from the Office of the Attorney General, spoke about the Foundation's application for 501(c)(3) status. She stated that the IRS application required specific details as to how the Foundation planned to conduct fundraising efforts and how it planned to spend any money brought in. She said the IRS would not grant 501(c)(3) status without this level of detail.

Much discussion ensued. Chairman Hanson stated that all funds raised go directly to the state; Ms. Eure questioned why the exempt status was needed if covered by the state. She asked Ms. Hezel's opinion regarding whether or not the 501(c)(3) status was really needed.

After discussion, Commissioner Burgess suggested that this would be an issue to discuss at the retreat (which would be discussed later in the meeting). Chairman Hanson agreed that the Foundation should table this issue until the retreat.

Foundation members thanked Ms. Hezel for her update and for her efforts in completing the 501(c)(3) application).

New Business

Commissioner Burgess recommended that the Foundation hold a retreat session sometime in the spring of 2006 with an outside facilitator to discuss the VSF mission, purpose, etc. and also to discuss how the Department of Veterans Services could best support the Foundation in meeting its objectives. The cost of the retreat would be borne by the Department.

All members agreed that a retreat would be a good idea. Ms. Eure suggested that an organizational structure be presented for clarification of the relationship between the Board of Veterans Services (BVS), the Joint Leadership Council (JLC) and the Veterans Services Foundation. Ms. Dudley concurred. Chairman Hanson stated that the original intent of the creation of the Foundation was a good idea; however, it was a bit confusing. He stated that it would be a good idea to have structure and parameters.

Dr. Gross suggested that the Foundation should go back to its initial organization charter and review it for modification. He stated that when the Foundation was established, it was organized so that it would not have to be restructured across Administrations. He suggested that legislation creating the Foundation be provided in advance.

Chairman Hanson suggested that staff provide an overview or have representatives from the BVS and JLC to discuss their mission/vision/purpose and discuss how the VSF interacts with each group.

It was determined that there was consensus to proceed with plans for a retreat. Commissioner Burgess stated that he would provide Chairman Hanson with a specific date. He further stated that a meeting would be arranged for the facilitator to meet with Chairman Hanson to discuss desired outcomes prior to the retreat.

Mr. Louthan expressed his concern not to meet for the sake of meeting, but rather, the members should come prepared to voice their concerns, suggestions and comments..

Housekeeping Issues

Chairman Hanson reminded Foundation members that per Code, they were entitled to mileage reimbursements and compensation as members of the Foundation. Roz Trent was asked to send travel expense vouchers to each member for signatures prior to the next meeting.

Ms. Eure suggested that a letter of appreciation be sent to former Commissioner Jon Mangis to thank him for his efforts and leadership in working with the Foundation. Commissioner Burgess agreed that staff would prepare a letter for the Chairman's signature. Foundation members would be copied as well.

Public Comment Period

There were no attendees from the public.

Determine Date and Location of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Veterans Services Foundation would be held on Wednesday, February 8, 2006 at 11:00 a.m. at the American Legion Department of Virginia Building. The facilitator of the retreat would also be present at this meeting.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.